(Copy)

Washington May 1st 64.

My dear McClure

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I can answer the question put by you in your note of the 29th ult. with perfect candor, and would have done so more promptly had the performance of public affairs permitted. I remember the interview very well. After a brief interchange of pleasantries between the President and Miss [illegible] Dickinson I alluded to the attention Louisiana affairs were attracting, and requested the President to give us as much information upon the subject as his leisure would permit and the public interest justify — He said promptly that he would tell us all about the matter, and proceeded to give us a succinct narrative of the progress of events producing his files

and reading letters that had passed between Linn and Gen. Banks.
I expressed my gratification that all the letters spoke of a free State of Louisiana and a free State only — and my doubt whether it was not a grave mistake on the Gen. Banks to have ordered the election of state officers before that delegates to constitutional convention had taken place. On this point I added that I thought the latter would if it had preceded the other have secured negro citizenship, while the other order might defeat it.
The President met the suggestion promptly — said that a powerful argument would be made in favor of my theory — that it had been presented to Linn by several gentlemen among whom was Hon B. F. Flanders; but that as things were he thought the other plan rather the better. That must

Come soon" said he "It must come pretty soon, and will" — refering to negro citizenship.

I repeat & elsewhere as I do now my regret that the election of delegates was not ordered as the primary step by Genl. Banks; but I neither felt nor expressed disgust or anything kindred thereto. It pleased me to know that the President had firmly stipulated for a free state and that he saw the coming of Negro suffrage in Louisiana — That interview helped me to the conclusion in which I abide, that "Abraham Lincoln is the wisest radical of us all" as I once phrased it in your hearing — Have I answered your question fully? If not I will add that the impression made on my mind by the interview was much to Mr. Lincoln's advantage.

Yours very truly
Wm. D. Kelley.